



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

WISDOM IN TEACHING CRITICAL RESULTS.

By PROFESSOR F. B. DENIO,
Bangor, Me.

Sensitiveness respecting discussions about the Bible.—A conviction of the vital relation of the Bible to redemption and sanctification at the root of this.—This conviction natural and right.—Need of caution in dealing with this sensitiveness.—Wisdom consists in emphasizing essentials.

What is the meaning of the sensitiveness often manifested regarding the discussions respecting the Bible? It arises from the general consciousness of the vital relation between the Bible and the Christian life, and a fear that these discussions tend to injure the Bible. While this is faith, it is a weak faith. There is a conviction that the Bible, in its entirety, is essential to Protestant Christianity. In its most extreme form this belief affirms that the literal acceptance of each statement of the Bible is essential to salvation. From that extreme the sense of the importance of the Bible varies until the opposite extreme is reached, where the contents of the Bible are valued no more than any other book. Some ask if the former be not the safer belief. It is a belief which grows out of a religious spirit as the other does not, but it works as much injury to the intelligence of man as the latter to his religious nature. It inevitably provokes reaction, and reactions never fail to injure the truth intended to be conserved.

As has been stated, there is a conviction that the Bible, in its entirety, is essential to Protestant Christianity. Does this conviction carry with it a clear knowledge of what it implies? *i. e.*, as to the actual relation between the Bible and Christianity? Not always. Christianity is the religion of redemption through Jesus Christ. The man who accepts Jesus Christ as Redeemer and King is a Christian. Some prefer to put King first; rather Redeemer should come first, for the proper kingship does not begin until the redemptive work has become operative in a man's

life. Thus Christianity has for its vital essence redemption into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. In the Bible the redemption is represented at the first as deliverance from human oppression, human injustice, physical pain, disease and want ; later the idea rises to deliverance from moral evil, bondage to sinful habit, alienation from God, always ascending until it culminates in a likeness to God, a participation in the divine nature, when man shall have escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust. The Bible is thus a record of the genesis of the idea of redemption and of the redemptive work. As a record it is subsequent to that work and dependent upon it. Hence, if that redemptive process is unreal the Bible is untrustworthy. Does it follow if the Bible is untrustworthy the redemptive process is unreal? If the consequence be valueless is there reason for faith in the cause. The inference here is quickly drawn and not unnatural.

Also the Bible has a connection quite as close with the present process of redemption and its future course. The Christian life means growth in holiness, it is the conscious obedience to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. This is accomplished only as the believer is in fellowship with Jesus Christ, only as he submits himself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, only through the instrumentality of the truths of the Gospel as recorded in the Bible. From this statement it is evident that the Bible is the only authoritative standard and means of redemption, There are two other methods of gaining religious truth which have not been under discussion for centuries,—the human reason and the church. Both have their functions, and without their operation the perfection of human nature is not reached. Both are liable to lead astray because of the vitiating influence of human sin. Both depend upon the Bible in matters pertaining to redemption. Indeed, "if the gospels were to be lost or all faith in their truth to perish, Christianity as a distinctive type of religion would perish" (Bruce). "There is no reason to believe that Christianity would for any long time continue to exist as an active power in the world, were the Bible to be blotted out of existence" (Stearns). The conviction of the vital rela-

tion of the Bible to the Christian life which lies at the bottom of much uneasiness regarding the critical discussions is well grounded. This conviction is abundantly justified by the scientific theologian.

While the conviction which lies at the bottom of much present sensitiveness is well grounded, we are led to ask, Is the uneasiness itself as well grounded? Without doubt it comes from the idea that the present trend of biblical study is in the direction of undermining the truthfulness, authority or inspiration of the Bible. On the other hand, there is no reason to doubt that Christian scholars, including those whose teachings are thought to be undermining the Bible, agree in holding to the truth of the Bible, its authority and inspiration. In their own belief there is no good reason for any uneasiness which is aroused by their methods or teachings. Not often can there be found anything in their teachings which antagonizes a sound belief in the Bible.

The question whether methods are not sometimes such as to excite uneasiness is one which needs a somewhat different answer. Just at the present time there are many assurances that constructive work has begun; that the period of destructive work is past. But, after all, ought there to have been any work which was simply destructive? Is the simile of tearing down and building up the best one? Are the processes of the intellect and of the spiritual life thus mechanical? Is it not a right instinct on the part of the many which calls ever and only for positive teaching, be it ever so little? Is not spiritual life a growth not a construction? Building up, edification, is a New Testament simile, but the conception there is of a living growth. Is not the true process that of giving the mind and soul the more important positive truths in vital form, leaving them to time, and letting them in their proper development displace the error which needs to be overcome? It seems that there has been some disregard of the principles of intellectual and spiritual growth, and the sensitiveness regarding the present discussions has some foundation in this disregard. It concerns methods of the presentation of the subject rather than the subject itself. The scholar who puts the "errors" of the Bible at the front, or who,

with flamboyant banner, charges upon an obnoxious theory of inspiration frequently has himself to thank that he is misunderstood.

The normal method of progress is not that of wrenching or driving forward into new truth or life. The Spirit of truth does his work not with observation. "Men are not argued out of beliefs which they were never argued into," is the saying of a sage. Truth wisely stated will act mightly. This generation is earnestly seeking truth, and will accept much fresh truth respecting the Bible and its teachings if wisely presented. It is a delicate task to bring one person or many, a class of men, and much more a generation of men, from a narrow view of Scripture, of revelation or of redemptive processes to a broad view. It is a case of the "cure of souls" quite as much as that of the pastor in dealing with the members of his church and congregation. I believe that our generation is rightly sensitive to the touch of a teacher when he is harsh. This sensitiveness may indicate a somewhat morbid condition, and this is additional reason why the touch should be gentle. Souls are more sensitive than bodies. A child in sickness dreads the harsh touch of an occasional physician. The physician may have in mind the good of the patient and think that he will inflict no real injury. He is apt, however, to retard recovery, to limit needlessly his own power for good.

Therefore those who have it in their lot in any way to help forward the present study of the Bible will do much to quiet any sensitiveness as to their labors, if they will appreciate the delicacy of the process of leading a great body of Christian believers to a broader and richer appreciation of God's word; if they should have a keener appreciation of the difficulties of the transition; if they would put forward the more essential elements of teaching, and trust the Spirit of truth to lead by his own ways into the secondary truths.